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CRIME PREVENTION AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Report of the Ninth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the General Assembly, pursuant to its resolution 49/157 of 23 December 1994 and Economic and Social Council decision 1995/211, the report of the Ninth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders (see annex).

* A/50/150.

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ANNEX

Report of the Ninth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders

1. The Ninth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders was held at Cairo from 29 April to 10 May 1995, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 49/157 of 23 December 1994 and Economic and Social Council decision 1995/211. The Congress was convened in pursuance also of General Assembly resolutions 415 (V) of 1 December 1950 and 46/152 of 18 December 1991, providing for the convening of quinquennial world congresses as part of the responsibilities assumed by the United Nations in this field, and of General Assembly resolutions 48/103 of 20 December 1993 and 49/157, concerning the preparations for the Congress. The Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice served as the preparatory body for the Congress: its recommendations for the Congress agenda, rules of procedure, documentation and format, including workshops, and other innovations designed to enhance its practical value, were approved by the Economic and Social Council in its resolutions 1992/24 of 30 July 1992, 1993/32 of 27 July 1993 and 1994/19 of 25 July 1994. As agreed, the Congress was preceded by a day of intergovernmental consultations.

2. This first United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime held in Africa was attended by over 1,700 participants, including representatives from 138 countries, many of them ministers of justice or the interior, chief justices, attorneys-general and other high-level officials, as well as representatives of interregional and non-governmental organizations and individual experts. The report of the Congress is before the General Assembly as document A/CONF.169/16/Rev.1. The Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice at its fourth session (30 May-9 June 1995), considered the conclusions and recommendations of the Congress, and adopted a draft resolution for action by the General Assembly, as well as a number of draft resolutions for approval by the Economic and Social Council, whose report will also be before the Assembly. a/

3. Extensive preparations had been conducted for the Congress. Regional preparatory meetings were held in 1994, with the reports submitted to the Congress, along with extensive other documentation that included working papers on the four agenda items and background papers for the six workshops, contributions on certain priority aspects, such as corruption, national statements and submissions by intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and other parts of the United Nations system. The Congress was held under amended rules of procedure which, inter alia, required the prior submission of draft resolutions. Its new format, designed to maximize its practical and scientific value, included the organization of problem-oriented workshops and actual demonstrations of different approaches to facilitate technical assistance and cooperation. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 46/152, containing a statement of principles and programme of action of the United Nations crime prevention and criminal justice programme, General Assembly resolution 49/157 (para. 13) and Economic and Social Council resolutions 1992/22 of 30 July 1992, 1993/34 of 27 July 1993 and 1994/22 of

25 July 1994, stressing the need for practical assistance to Governments and other forms of technical cooperation as the primary mission of the programme (and a standing item on the Commission's agenda), major attention was given to this aspect in the Congress deliberations. One of the main agenda items focused on "International cooperation and practical technical assistance for strengthening the rule of law: promoting the United Nations crime prevention and criminal justice programme", which was discussed in plenary sessions. In addition, a special session on technical cooperation was held on 5 May, which noted the importance of operational activities in providing follow-up to the recommendations of the Congress and the Commission, highlighted major needs, and reviewed the experience to date with the provision of advisory services. All the speakers noted the increased threat posed to society by crime, especially organized crime, and the necessity of capacity-building or rebuilding to meet the new challenges, often under considerable constraints. Emphasis was also placed on identifying technical assistance programmes and mechanisms that would, in a cost-effective way, maximize the collective capacity to fight global crime.

4. The other agenda items also reflected the programme priorities, as established by the Commission. They included "Action against national and transnational economic and organized crime and the role of criminal law in the protection of the environment: national experiences and international cooperation", which was considered in a plenary session, with a special session on corruption. Two other items were dealt with in Committee sessions: "Criminal justice and police systems; management and improvement of police and other law enforcement agencies, prosecution, courts and the role of lawyers", and "Crime prevention strategies, in particular as related to crimes in urban areas and juvenile and violent criminality, including the question of victims: assessment and new perspectives".

5. Six workshops were held, on the following topics: (a) extradition and international cooperation: exchange of national experience and implementation of relevant principles in national legislation; (b) mass media and crime prevention; (c) urban policy and crime prevention; (d) prevention of violent crime; (e) environmental protection at the national and international levels: potential and limits of criminal justice; and (f) international cooperation and assistance in the management of the criminal justice system: computerization of criminal justice operations and the development, analysis and policy use of criminal justice information. The workshops were considered a useful innovation, to be continued in the future, perhaps with a reduced number and a less formal structure, but maintaining their practical orientation. There were also a number of ancillary meetings on various subjects, convened by non-governmental organizations, and an exhibit on computerized applications in crime prevention and criminal justice, which further enhanced the professional value of the Congress.

6. The unique character of the Congress, in which the participants combined political leverage and expertise, and which served as a forum for the world-wide sharing of knowledge, exchange of experience and transfer of technological know-how, has been widely recognized, and its productive results were emphasized both at the Congress and at the Commission's subsequent session. The remote translation system (by Internet, facsimile and satellite), which it successfully used, is to be emulated at future meetings. It was the first time that a major

United Nations conference of this size employed remote translation across continents (at an estimated cost-saving of $222,800). Ways of further optimizing the arrangements have also been suggested, such as the designation of part of the plenary sessions as a "high-level segment" for national policy makers and other senior government officials eager to consider appropriate national and joint strategies in areas of mutual concern.

7. In their messages to the Congress, the Secretary-General, the President of Egypt and other dignitaries stressed that the Congress provided a global framework to meet the needs of countries all along the continuum of development at a time when crime was posing an increased danger. They noted that new, rapacious forms of criminality took advantage of the very trends that also brought many benefits: improvement in transportation and communication technologies, relaxation of border controls and internationalization of world markets. Transnational criminals were engaged in trafficking in arms, drugs, hazardous substances and even human beings, leaving behind a trail of crime, corruption and human and environmental damage. Rising crime was impairing the development process, the social fabric and general well-being, challenging legitimate Governments, exacerbating flashpoints of conflict and eroding public institutions, thus threatening stability and the rule of law, and undermining security within and between States. Much had been done: a body of international standards existed but they had to be translated into practice and concerted action taken by Member States.

8. The Congress revealed a remarkable degree of consensus in most respects, especially on the need for strengthened, urgent action to counter the escalation of crime, particularly in its alarming new transnational forms and dimensions. It unanimously adopted a number of resolutions and recommendations that were transmitted to the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice for appropriate follow-up. They included a comprehensive resolution containing recommendations on the four substantive items of its agenda, as well as a number of other resolutions dealing with special concerns. These pertained to international cooperation and practical assistance for strengthening the rule of law; development of United Nations model instruments, such as a convention or conventions against organized transnational crime; links between terrorist crimes and transnational organized crime; practical implementation of the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners; criminal justice management for accountability of public administration and sustainable development; children as victims and perpetrators of crime and the United Nations criminal justice programme: from standard-setting towards implementation and action; elimination of violence against women; and firearms regulation for purposes of crime prevention and public safety. The Congress also adopted a resolution conveying its profound gratitude to the people and Government of Egypt for their generous hospitality and the provision of excellent facilities, and welcomed its invitation to establish, at Cairo, a regional centre for training and research on crime prevention for Mediterranean States.

9. As recommended by the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session, on 24 July 1995, adopted an omnibus resolution 1995/8, as well as seven other resolutions, 1995/9 to 1995/15. The policy and programme implications of the decisions taken will

be outlined in the Secretary-General's progress report on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 49/158 of 23 December 1994 which will also be submitted under this agenda item.

Notes

a/ To be published as Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1995, Supplement No. 10.